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Niles appoints new finance director

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
The Niles City Council unanimously confirmed the appointment of Ken Elkins to the position of Finance Director Monday night. Elkins (right) poses with Niles Mayor Nick Shelton.

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The City of Niles welcomed its new finance director at Monday's city council meeting.

The council unanimously confirmed the appointment of Ken Elkins to the position of Finance Director effective May 28, 2025.

Elkins has held the Deputy Finance Director position for the past six years and holds a Master of Business Administration Degree. He will replace Sandy Naugle who is retiring effective May 27, 2025. For the past year, Elkins has worked closely with Naugle to prepare for the possible appointment to City Finance Director. The position of Finance Director is appointed by the City Administrator in consultation with the Mayor and Confirmed by the City Council.

Congratulations, Ken," said Mayor Nick Shelton following Elkins' appointment. "We're so happy to have you."

In other business, the council accepted a $57,020 proposal from Wightman and Associates of Benton Harbor for professional services associated with the Pokagon Street repair project.

Plans call for cold-milling, resurfacing, ADA ramps, etc. on Pokagon Street between Second and Fifth Streets. These projects are expected to be designed and submitted to the Michigan Department of Transportation in Lansing this summer or fall with a winter project award and spring 2026 construction.

The City of Niles Department of Public Works has been successful in securing $391,078 in Federal Surface Transportation Program funds

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"At Niles Community Schools, the safety and well-being of our students and staff are our highest priorities. As such, we are committed to maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment for all."
— **Superintendent Adam Burtsfield**

Niles teacher placed on leave

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A Niles Community Schools teacher has been placed on leave after a video posted on the internet purported inappropriate behavior with a minor.

The teacher was placed on administrative leave Tuesday as the district begins an internal investigation, stated Superintendent Adam Burtsfield in a letter to parents.

"At Niles Community Schools, the safety and well-being of our students and staff are our highest priorities," he said. "As such, we are committed to maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment for all. We want to inform you that the district has been made aware of a situation involving a high school staff member. While we are unable to share specific details due to this being a personnel matter, we want to assure you that we are taking this matter very seriously. The staff member has been placed on administrative leave while the district conducts an internal investigation.

"Additionally, we have contacted the local police department to ensure that the appropriate authorities are involved."

A video of the teacher being confronted by a Facebook group called Dads Against Predators was widely circulated throughout the Niles community prior to him being placed on leave. The video allegedly shows the teacher inside his vehicle intending to meet a teenager he messaged on the internet. He was then met by adult representatives from the non-law enforcement group, who confronted him about messages exchanged between him and a decoy pretending to be 15 years old. After being confronted, the teacher quickly drives away.

"We understand that this news may raise concerns, and we appreciate your trust as we work through this process," Burtsfield said. "Please know that we remain committed to transparency within the limits of the law and will continue to prioritize the safety and well-being of our students. As we work through this process, we will continue to cooperate fully with the appropriate authorities.

"Once the investigation is complete, we will take any necessary actions in accordance with NCS Board policies, as well as federal and state laws."

This is a developing story. Leaderpub.com will be updated as more information becomes available.

HEART FOR HOME

Nonprofit aims to cultivate support for foster children, caregivers in southwest Michigan

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A local nonprofit organization is doing its part to provide a safe haven for foster, adoptive and kinship children in southwest Michigan.

Founded in Kalamazoo in 2023 by Michelle Dulaney and Johni Bunch, Heart for Home is a nonprofit organization aiming to connect foster, adoptive and kinship children with supportive and healing homes for respite care.

Respite homes are licensed foster homes available for temporary care for foster and adopted children along with families working with Community Mental Health who have respite

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SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
Heart for Home CEO Michelle Delayney.

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Edwardsburg school board approves school calendar, School of Choice rates

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
Leader Publications Contributor

EDWARDSBURG — The Edwardsburg Public School Board looked ahead at several plans for the future during their regular board meeting on Monday.

One consideration was the school calendar for the 2025-2026 school year, with the exception of choosing a graduation date. The new calendar is borne out of negotiation between school administration and the teachers union, as well as taking into account feedback from the community and school board. In explaining the need for half days in the schedule, Superintendent Dr. Courtney Szucs explained that the district offers "plenty of hours" to meet state requirements, but they also must meet a 180 day requirement of student instruction. A decision on choosing a graduation date for next year was tabled until the April meeting, giving staff time to gather additional information, including vendor availability.

During the discussion it was also noted that the district is expecting the approval of a snow day waiver for the current school year, making it unlikely for the schedule to need to be extended into June to account for the extra days off.

During the meeting, the

See SCHOOL, Page A8

FILE | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

OBITUARIES

Vicki Shields
Vaniel "Lefty" Nelson
Robert Eugene Riley
Julia Miranda
Diane Ford
Ruby 'Geri' Geraldine Frederick
Jean Anthony
Alana Adele Watry
Carol J. Young
Kenneth Eugene Purlee
Kathryne Lee Randle
A6

FRANKLY
TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

Best place to buy big flower pots in the Dowagiac area? A2

Brandywine's season ends in 31-29 loss to Arbor Prep B1

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip, quip or blip? Call or text Frankly at 219-455-2349 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com

If you think firing 7,000 Social Security employees will speed up customer service, maybe grocery stores should cut half of their checkout clerks to make things go really fast.

After all of these years, Canada is suddenly an enemy of the US people? Really? Canada has fought alongside our troops in many battles. We have enjoyed their friendship and a trade agreement that Trump, himself, signed into law during his first term.

The US can no longer pay to be the protector of the world. We spend so much money on our credit card and it's catching up to us.

Thank you Brandywine Girls Basketball for another great run. You'll get there. Keep the faith.

I'm all for cannabis stores and the deregulation we have seen, but I think we have too many new stores coming in. Will these stores be able to support themselves?

I agree with the recent Frankly egg comments. Egg producers are having a record revenue year. How can that be if there is such a shortage? I see a good supply of eggs at every store.

If Musk and Trump really want to do some good, go after healthcare and insurance. That's something that the left and right could really rally behind and unify the country with. Prescriptions are insanely high and the hospital bills are causing great American hardship.

Any chance US Hwy 12 can be turned into a four lane highway? There are too many speeders, tailgaters and just rude drivers with road rage. It's getting more and more dangerous.

Best place to buy big flower pots in the Dowagiac area?

Trump did not put his hand on the Bible when he was sworn into office... Why? Is he really the President of the US?

WEATHER

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
50% Chance Rain Showers	Rain	50% Chance Snow Showers	Partly Cloudy	70% Chance Rain Showers	40% Chance of Rain
72° 56°	69° 47°	46° 28°	47° 37°	59° 45°	61° 51°

NILES MAIN STREET TO HOST INAUGURAL FRIYAY EVENT NEXT MONTH

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A new monthly event promises evenings full of adventure, prizes, and festive fun in downtown Niles.

Niles Main Street is inviting the community to its inaugural FriYay event from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, April 11 in Downtown Niles. Participants can kick off the fun at The NODE, where they'll pick up a scavenger hunt card before heading out to explore participating businesses throughout downtown. Each stop will have a special prize or treat, making the hunt even more exciting! Once the card is completed, participants bring it back to The Node to be entered into a prize drawing.

The Easter Bunny will be also available at The Node for Free photos until 8 p.m. Families are encouraged to bring their cameras and capture special memories with this beloved holiday guest.

"This event is a great way to bring the community together, support our local businesses, and celebrate the season with a night of fun and excitement," said Bettina Payton, Chair of the Niles Main Street Promotions Committee.

FriYay will be a monthly event downtown, taking place on the second Friday of each month. For more information, visit the Niles Main Street Facebook page.

Buchanan commissioners talk city's retail potential, DDA

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

BUCHANAN — Buchanan City Commissioners tackled a number of topics at their meeting Monday, ranging from a market analysis of the city's retail potential to grant applications for two city parks. Commissioners also called on people to apply for the soon to be restored Downtown Development Authority.

Monday's meeting began with a proclamation for Women's History Month honoring the city's women business owners. Mayor Mark Weedon noted there are 410 businesses in Berrien County owned by women and seven percent of them – around 30 or so – are in Buchanan.

"It's unbelievable the number of women business owners in the county and in the city," he said.

The next item on the agenda was a presentation by Cornerstone Alliance Vice-President Andrew Haan. Haan gave details of the market analysis and real estate development strategy Cornerstone conducted in Buchanan last summer.

He said Buchanan was one of four communities in the county that Cornerstone worked with after getting a state rural readiness grant. The other three communities were St. Joseph Township and the cities of Niles and Watervliet.

Haan told commissioners that the market analysis of Buchanan showed that there is an annual capacity of over $300 million in demand for retail and services, with only $99 million supplied each year. He said that means that there is a potential for more retail and service oriented businesses in a variety of areas.

While the local economy won't capture all of that $200 million in "leakage", he said it's realistic to think that 20 percent of that demand could be captured. That would amount to around $43 million worth of new businesses.

Other findings from the market analysis included that visitors come to Buchanan mostly during the daytime hours, that the 18-29 age group is the biggest age group that comes downtown and $50,000 to $75,000 is the typical income range of those coming.

Haan said that the market analysis produced a number of recommendations. Those include repurposing the "Vision for Buchanan" statement to have a developer focus, establishing new redevelopment and place management tools, create additional National Historic Register districts, add more downtown housing and

See TALK, Page A8

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USPS to implement changes next week

COMMUNITY REPORT

WASHINGTON, DC — Beginning next month, cost-cutting measures by the United States Postal Service are expected to change delivery speeds for millions across the country.

These adjustments will affect First-Class Mail, Periodicals, Marketing Mail, Package Services – including Bound Printed Matter, Media Mail and Library Mail – USPS Ground Advantage, Priority Mail, and Priority Mail Express.

The USPS is implementing its refinement service plan with the aim of increasing productivity, delivery reliability and ultimately saving the postal service an estimated $36 billion over the next 10 years. However, the plan may also delay deliveries for some customers.

The service standards refinement will occur in two phases to ensure effective operational implementation: the first phase will begin April 1. The second phase will start July 1.

In an announcement posted on the agency's website, the USPS claims it is saving $4.7 billion by streamlining networks and optimizing air and surface options, decreasing work hours by 50 million and enhancing plant productivity and closing unnecessary facilities. The announcement also states that the Postal Service has increased revenue by $3.5 billion annually by adapting product offerings amidst significant declines in First-Class Mail volume.

The announcement claims the changes will guarantee that First-Class Mail delivery times will not exceed five days and that the USPS is planning to provide a two-to-three-day turnaround service in select areas. Even so, some post offices may delay deliveries by one day due to a change in regional transportation schedules. Mail will also be tracked more precisely at a local level.

In preparation for these upcoming changes, USPS has developed tools to assist customers in understanding expected delivery times for their mail.

Starting March 24:

• Customers can look up service standards on usps.com for mailings from one ZIP Code to another on a particular mailing date. The search results will display the available mail classes along with the expected delivery dates for each.

• A new interactive map will be available that will display service standards. Customers will be able to enter the ZIP Code they are mailing from along with the mail class to view the expected delivery time.

The USPS is the only delivery service that reaches every address in the nation – early 167 million residences, businesses and Post Office Boxes. The Postal Service generally receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

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PET OF THE WEEK

Sparkle is a six year-old, pure-white lap cat who volunteers say thrives on attention. She's social and eager to greet visitors like a society hostess. She'll welcome you at the door when you come home, too. A bit of a diva, Sparkle loves being doted on, so be ready to cuddle her close, and keep a brush on hand for primping. She is spayed and current on vaccines. Paws of Hope would love you to arrange a visit at adoptions@pawsofhope.org

Brandywine school board talks summer school program, appoints student representative

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — Brandywine Board of Education members handled a number of items at their meeting Monday night including appointing a student representative to the board and approving contracts for card access to buildings, surveillance cameras and resurfacing the high school track.

Board members also learned that district administrators are debating what kind of summer school program, if any, will be offered this summer. Superintendent Travis Walker said he expects the decision to be made by the end of April if not sooner.

Walker told board members that he and other administrators began talking about what summer school will look like this year after hearing about the possibility of U.S. Department of Education funding cuts and not knowing exactly what funding will be available.

He noted that summer school is funded primarily through Title I federal funds. "We've heard different things that there could be some cuts, but there's nothing definitive," he said. "We've looked at whether summer school is the best way to spend the funds we have if there are cuts."

He added that another issue to throw into the mix is the fact that work on securing building entrances is scheduled to start at district buildings as soon as school lets out in June. He said that they will have to find another location for the summer school program or build a "firewall" to separate students from the construction.

"We started thinking that last year only about 25 percent of eligible students who took advantage of the

See BOARD, Page A4

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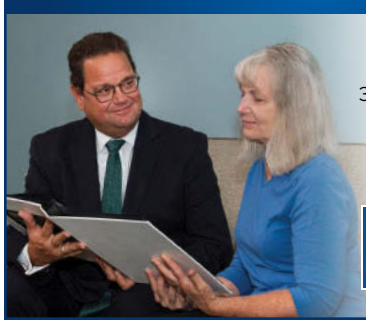

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Opinion

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Our Not-So-Great Lakes

Dear Editor,

The effects of DOGE will be felt by our Great Lakes and those who live near them as industry and environmental advocates warn that federal funding freezes will have a huge negative impact on the lakes and their sensitive environment if not reversed.

Initial actions taken by Musk and his DOGE team already risk poisoning drinking water, decimating fish populations and impacting the health of the many millions who rely on the Great Lakes as they seek to cut hundreds of millions of dollars of funding dedicated to protecting the lakes, which provide drinking water to over 40 million people and hold around 90 percent of the freshwater in the US. The lakes also support over $750 billion in annual commerce.

They have already cut the US Fish and Wildlife Service sea lamprey control unit. These invasive lampreys threaten to destroy the $7 billion dollar Great Lakes fishing industry due to plunging populations of Lake Trout, Whitefish, Salmon, Perch, and Walleye.

A similar program aimed at elimination of the invasive Asian carp has also been defunded.

DOGE also eliminated NOAA staffing for programs that monitor ice cover, operate water level gauges and weather buoys, which degrade navigational safety.

And the State of Michigan doesn't have the resources to step in, as federal funding makes up about $750 million of the $1 billion budget for Michigan's state environmental agency. The Trump administration proposes to cut 40 percent of the $750 million they currently contribute annually.

Meanwhile, federal statutes regulating things like the allowable amount of sewage sent into the lakes have been rolled back. Trump's EPA proposes cutting 675 of the 1,035 EPA staff who work in Michigan. They have already eliminated 18 enforcement staff, including six attorneys who work on enforcement targeting the area's worst polluters.

There is a fear that there may be cuts to programs that work to prevent sewage, farm fertilizer and other pollutants from flowing into the lakes. This is in spite of the fact that in 2014 around 400,000 people were left without drinking water for several days due to a toxic algae bloom in Toledo, and a 1993 cryptosporidiosis outbreak, likely due to ineffective filtration at a water plant, sickened another 400,000 Milwaukee residents, resulting in 69 deaths and mass hospitalizations.

The ignorance shown by the Trump/Musk DOGE team is staggering. There is the potential for an incredible amount of economic, social and environmental upheaval.

We must act now to protect the Great Lakes. Contact your elected officials today and demand that they take action.

Paul Orlando
Benton Harbor

As an elder, I've never seen an attack on our democracy like this

Dear editor,

As an elder, I've lived through many political crises in this country—but I have never seen an attack on our democracy like this. In the past, there was bipartisan opposition to lawlessness. Today, the guardrails are being dismantled before our eyes, and we must sound the alarm.

Beyond party, to see an active genocide being prosecuted by our country coupled with the demonization of protestors cuts against our deepest values. Long needing a humane immigration policy and practice, we instead see fear and blame cast to destroy lives and families. Now the very wealthy have made it clear they do not know our common humanity. We must join to find a new path together.

Sincerely,
Michael Mulberry
Sawyer, MI

NEWS

Elkhart man gets prison time for assaulting minor

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — An Elkhart man is going to prison for sexually molesting a young child last year. He was one of several people sentenced Monday in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse.

Parchman

Donterious Tirrelle-Lee Parchman, 30, of Elkhart, pleaded guilty to first-degree criminal sexual conduct and was sentenced to seven years to 49 years in prison. He has credit for 168 days already served and must pay $258 in fines and costs.

Parchman is required to be on lifetime electronic monitoring and also register on the sex offender registry for the rest of his life.

The incidents occurred in April and May of 2024 in Niles.

Parchman tried unsuccessfully to withdraw his plea, saying he was not fully informed when he accepted a plea deal from the prosecutor's office that removed the mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years in prison.

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein denied the motion, saying that he had explained all the elements of the plea agreement at the time of the plea more than a month ago and that Parchman had not had any questions. "He said the plea was his choice and explained what he did," the judge said. "I find no reason to let him withdraw his plea."

In comments before the sentencing, Assistant Prosecutor Jerry Vigansky called Parchman's actions "reprehensible." "I think he should serve as much time in prison as possible," he said. "The victim was six years old, this is reprehensive conduct. He deserves any time he gets."

Defense attorney Carri Briseno said Parchman suffers extreme anxiety and is broken up about what happened. "He said his memory of the incident is clouded," she said. "He had been binging on cocaine, meth and alcohol at the time which could have impaired his ability to control his impulses."

Parchman continued to maintain his innocence despite his decision to plead guilty.

"All too often we forget the victim," Judge Hosbein said. "This is a life offense for the victim. She will have to deal with the repercussions of this incident the rest of her life. It is a lifetime of trauma for her."

The judge said he was concerned about Parchman's lack of remorse for his actions. "You have a circular argument about what happened," he told Parchman. "You say she was lying, that she was told to lie and that you were on drugs. You should never be around children for the rest of your life."

In other sentencings, area residents were given probation sentences.

Timothy Brian O'Donnell, 67, of Buchanan, pleaded guilty to third offense drunk driving and was sentenced to two years probation, 180 days in jail with credit for 19 days served, 120 days tether, 480 hours of community service, $1,578 in fines and costs and $1,000 in restitution. His license was revoked and his car immobilized for 365 days.

O'Donnell

The incident occurred Dec. 6, 2024 in Buchanan. This was his fifth actual drunk driving conviction. His blood alcohol level was .21, more than twice the legal limit.

Defense attorney Shayne Williams said O'Donnell's last drunk driving conviction was 14 years ago before this one. For his part, O'Donnell apologized and knows what he did by driving drunk was "terribly wrong". He said he feels better since he stopped drinking and doesn't plan to drink alcohol ever again.

Pittman

Judge Hosbein noted that O'Donnell had been consuming alcohol every day and believed that rehabilitation is appropriate.

Tyreke Austin Pittman, 21, of South Bend, was found guilty of indecent exposure and being an accessory after the fact in two jury trials earlier this year. He was sentenced to two years probation, 180 days in jail with credit for 17 days served, 90 days tether and $783 in fines and costs. The rest of the jail term is on hold until the end of his probation.

The incident occurred Aug. 8, 2024 in Niles and involved him setting up a meeting with others for the sale of an X Box. When they showed up, an associate of Pittman's robbed them.

Briseno said Pittman plans to appeal his convictions. She said he has family support as well as a job to go back to. "He's a young man with no prior record," she said. "He has family support and is active in his church. It's important for him to get back on the right track."

Judge Hosbein said he hoped Pittman learned from the incident and will move on with his life.

Also Monday:

Frantz

• Russell Thompson Frantz, 47, of Niles, pleaded guilty to possession of methamphetamine and was sentenced to 2 years probation, 120 days in jail with credit of 76 days served and $598 in fines and costs. The rest of his jail term can be served in the Twin County Probation Program. The incident occurred Jan. 8 in Niles.

Miller

• Milton Miller, 71 of Niles, pleaded guilty to attempted assault with a dangerous weapon and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for 51 days served, 90 days tether, 50 hours community service and $678 in fines and costs. The incident occurred. Oct. 30, 2024 in Niles Township.

Smith

• Steven Howard Smith, 47, of Niles, pleaded guilty to assault and battery and two counts of resisting police and was sentenced to two years probation, 150 days in jail with credit for 82 days served, $698 in fines and costs. The rest of the jail term can be in Tri-Cap. The incident occurred Oct. 20, 2024 in Niles Township.

BOARD

Continued from page A3

program," he said. "Then we saw that less than 50 percent of those who attended last summer saw growth from their spring to their fall NWA tests."

Another point he mentioned is that while 300 students were eligible last year, only about 150 students are eligible this year due to interventions done during the school year to improve students' grades. He said the thought is that spending money on classroom interventions might be more impactful for the students.

Walker said the current thought is to have summer school for the elementary grades but to have a middle/high school summer school program including credit recovery at the Brandywine Innovation Academy. Another alternative would be to have all the summer school programs including the free meals at the middle/high school.

Board President Jessica Crouch suggested that if cuts do occur that the district could save the Title I funds it currently has set aside for summer school to spend in the classroom next year or save for next year's summer school offerings.

"We've heard maybe a 25 percent cut in funding," Walker said. "If we make changes this year, we may not have to cut as much in the first year of the DOE cuts to maintain the services we're providing."

In action, board members discussed the selection of a student representative to the board from the three students who applied. They ended up choosing junior Aleyna Vollman to serve in that post. The goal of having a non-voting student representative on the board is to bring their perspectives as well as providing information directly to students.

Walker said Vollman has been involved in a number of activities both in athletics and the fine arts. Board members liked that she said she wanted to advocate for programs for younger students and not just those at the high school.

Board members approved bids for the middle/high school track resurfacing as well as for access cards and surveillance cameras. A.G. Sports Services was the winning bidder for the track resurfacing, while Vermillion Systems was the winning bidder for the other two projects.

The costs will be around $134,650 for the track resurfacing and around $75,000 each for the other two projects.

Board members also heard from Assistant Superintendent Ray Wilburn about the second budget amendment for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Wilburn said general fund revenue is expected to be between $17.4 million and $17.5 million, with expenditures around $17.6 million. That budget deficit is smaller than the first budget amendment last fall where expenditures exceeded revenue by $525,000.

He said the primary difference between the two budget amendments was that the gym floor work had been included in the general fund but is now in the sinking fund.

He said if nothing changes by the end of the fiscal year in June, the district would have a fund balance of $3.8 million and a fund equity of $21.7 million. He said the district has enough funds on hand to cover three months of expenditures if no revenue was coming in.

The fund balance as a percentage of expenditures is at around 20 percent which Wilburn and Walker said is a healthy level.

Niles Daily Star

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COMICS & PUZZLES

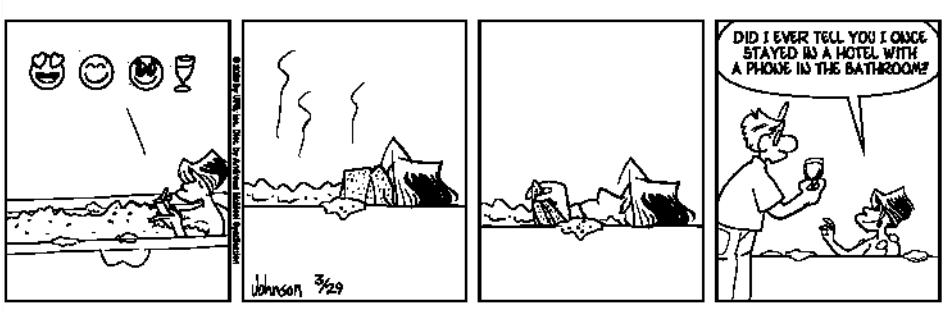
ADAM

OKAY. STAY, GUMBO. I'M GOING TO SLOWLY PULL OUT A CHICKEN JERKY TREAT. AND-
GYAH! DOWN, GIRL, DOWN!
OKAY, FINE! TAKE IT! TAKE IT!
GUMBO REEEALLY LIKES THE CHICKEN TREATS.
IT'S LIKE YOU AND BROWN SUGAR CINNAMON POP-TARTS.
HARROLL
3-29

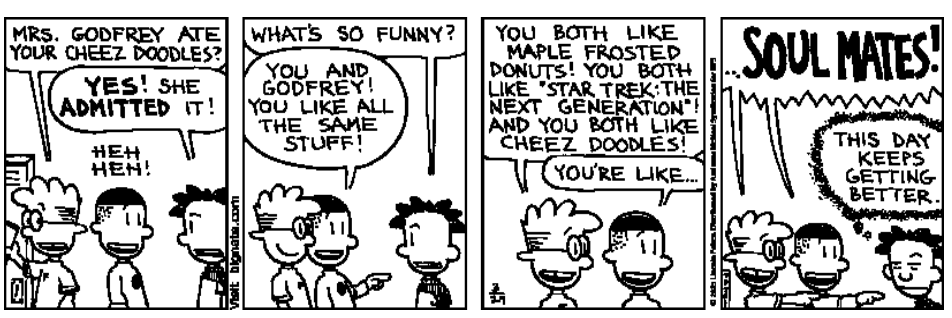
ALLEY OOP

TRIXIE, HOW CAN YOU BE EVIL? BOORN TOLD US TO FIND THE OLD WOMAN IN THE COTTAGE IN THE WOODS.
WHAT, YOU THINK I'M THE ONLY OLD WOMAN LIVING IN THE WOODS? THERE ARE DOZENS OF US!
WE MEET UP EVERY WEDNESDAY TO PLAY DOMINOES.
3/28
OF COURSE, AS THE EVIL ONE, I ALWAYS CHEAT AND WIN.
THAT'S HORRIBLE. DOMINOES IS A GAME OF HONOR!

ARLO & JANIS



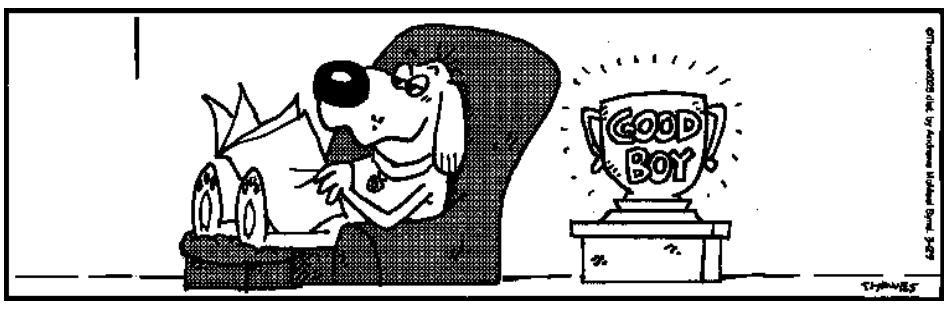
BIG NATE


MRS. GODFREY ATE YOUR CHEEZ DOODLES?
YES! SHE ADMITTED IT!
HEH HEH!
WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
YOU AND GODFREY! YOU LIKE ALL THE SAME STUFF!
YOU BOTH LIKE MAPLE FROSTED DONUTS! YOU BOTH LIKE "STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION"! AND YOU BOTH LIKE CHEEZ DOODLES!
YOU'RE LIKE...
...SOUL MATES!
THIS DAY KEEPS GETTING BETTER.

BORN LOSER

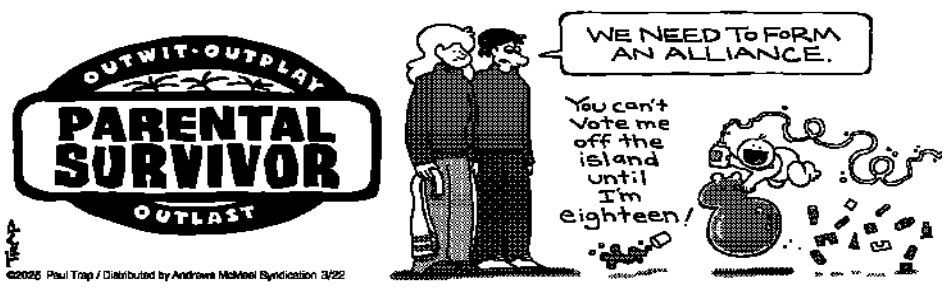
I FOUND THE EYE DROPS THE DOCTOR RECOMMENDED FOR MY DRY EYES.
THAT'S GOOD. DO THEY WORK?
YES—AS SOON AS I SAW THE PRICE, I STARTED CRYING!

FRANK & ERNEST



GRIZZWELLS

THATABABY


OUTWIT·OUTPLAY
PARENTAL SURVIVOR
OUTLAST
WE NEED TO FORM AN ALLIANCE.
You can't vote me off the island until I'm eighteen!
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SODOKU PUZZLE

HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

DIFFICULTY RATING: 5/5

ANSWER ON PAGE 6

	2				1			
		6		7		9	1	
1	7		9	8				
6				9			8	
	4		3	1	2		9	
	1			6				4
				4	9		3	1
	8	1		3		6		
			1				7	

MODERATELY CONFUSED

DO YOU THINK WE'RE OLD ENOUGH TO FIT IN ON A VIKING CRUISE?
STAHLER
3/29
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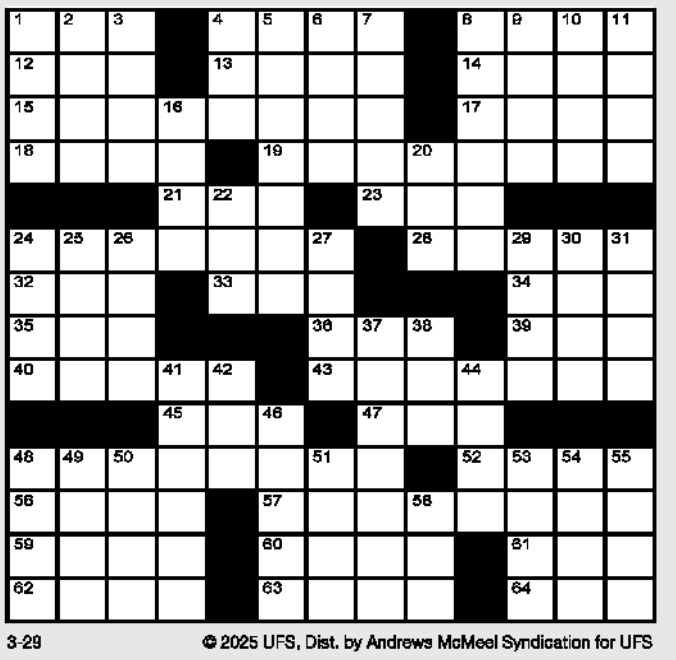
REALITY CHECK

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS
1 Abrade
4 Greek god of love
8 Lyric poems
12 Frost
13 "— 911!"
14 Event at Ascot
15 Unambiguous (Hyph.)
17 Unseen emanation
18 Injury
19 City in Turkey
21 Coaster
23 Assoc.
24 Circus performer
28 Singing voice
32 Ovine cry
33 — Baba
34 Mil. address
35 Scrap
36 Criticize
39 Crash against
40 Brewer's need
43 Wrap, as an infant
45 Lummox
47 Bud on a spud
48 Elevated road
52 Sailors' saint
56 Wheal
57 Chinese noodle dish (2 wds.)
59 "Death on the —"
60 Book
61 Foxy
62 Vehicle on runners
63 Future flower
64 Boston Red —

DOWN
1 Opulent
2 Bruins' sch.
3 Pilsner, for example
4 "To — is human ..."
5 Musical performance
6 Burden
7 — voce
8 Jell-O flavor
9 Paint crudely
10 Beige
11 Close
16 Gunner's need
20 Museum contents
22 Org. for lawyers
24 "— — Named Sue"
25 Concern
26 Pro —
27 Gratuities
29 Old ointment
30 Iridescent gem
31 City on the Tiber
37 Amazing
38 Certain vote
41 Categorized
42 Strike lightly
44 Think
46 Truths
48 Has possession of
49 Conceal
50 Fashion magazine
51 Loafer
53 Not as much
54 Venus de —
55 Black gemstone
58 Calendar abbr.

ANSWER ON PAGE 6



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BREVITY

SO YOU'RE TELLING ME THAT, EVEN THOUGH VHS WON THE VIDEO WARS, ITS MAIN COMPETITOR ALSO LASTED UNTIL 2016?
BAR
YOU BETA BELIEVE IT!
GOCOMICS.COM/BREVITY 3-29
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HEART OF THE CITY

I'M BACK! I MADE IT!! HERE'S MY BOOK REPORT!
DO I EVEN WANNA KNOW WHY IT'S BOTH HOT AND WET?
YOU DID IT! CONGRATS ON MAKING IT BACK UNSCATHED.
IT WAS A JOURNEY. BY THE WAY, I RAN INTO MS. THOMAS IN THE HALLWAY.
I THINK SHE'S AN EVIL SPIRIT ATTACHED TO THE SCHOOL WITH UNFINISHED BUSINESS.
I ALWAYS KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING UNHOLY ABOUT HER.
HEART OF THE CITY © 2025 ANDREWS MCMEEL
GOCOMICS.COM/HEARTOFTHECITY

DEATH NOTICES

Vicki Shields, 69, passed away on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Vaniel "Lefty" Nelson, Hoven Funeral Home, Buchanan, MI.

Robert Eugene Riley, 81, passed away on Saturday, March 22, 2025, in Stevensville, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Julia Miranda, 81, of Berrien Center, MI, passed away on Saturday, March 22, 2025. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs, Michigan. www.AllredFuneralHome.com

Diane Ford, 71, of Saint Joseph, passed away on March 20, 2025. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home. Service was held at Union Cemetery in Berrien Center. www.AllredFuneralHome.com

Ruby 'Geri' Geraldine Frederick, 81, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on Saturday, March 22, 2025. Arrangements are pending and have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

OBITUARIES

Jean Anthony

January 29, 192
- March 19, 2025

Jean (Moore) Anthony, 101, a lifelong resident of Dowagiac, passed away on Wednesday afternoon, March 19, 2025.

Jean was born on January 29, 1924, in Dowagiac, the only child to the late Edward and Hazel (Price) Moore. She was a 1942 graduate of Dowagiac Union High School. On June 16, 1946, Jean was united in marriage to Warren J. Anthony Jr. She was employed by F.W. Woolworth Co in Dowagiac for 21 years and later worked for Berrien General Hospital for 21 years until her retirement.

Surviving are her daughter - Warrene Brimmer; three granddaughters - Theresa (Jonathan) Tomblin, Amy Lillie and Heather Scissom; and four great-grandchildren - Chase Lee, Ryan Lee, Aviana Jones and Gianna Jones.

Preceding her in death were her husband of 49 years - Warren Anthony Jr; and son - Warren "Edward" Anthony.

A graveside service to celebrate Jean's life will be held at 1:00 PM on Wednesday, March 26, 2025 at Riverside Cemetery, 400 Riverside Dr, Dowagiac. Pastor Chris Momany will officiate. Memorial contributions may be directed to Dowagiac First United Methodist Church. Arrangements were entrusted to Clark Chapel - Starks Family Funeral Homes, Dowagiac. Please visit Jean's personalized webpage to share a memory or leave a condolence to her family at www.clarkch.com.

Alana Adele Watry

September 6, 1937
- March 17, 2025

With heavy hearts, we share that our beloved Mother, Alana Adele Ayers Watry of Niles Michigan, at the age of 87, has passed peacefully on March 17, 2025, suffering from congestive heart failure.

Adele was born in Schenectady New York to her parents Emma Laurena Marsh Ayers and Edgar Harvey Ayers. Adele was raised in Niles Michigan. She was a graduate of Niles Highschool class of 1955. Her love of horses resonated to her children, as she served as their 4-H horse club organizational leader. They enjoyed many years of equestrian fun. As a second generation member of the National Button Society, Adele showed buttons throughout the United States. Adele was a hard working, smart woman who while managing the household, held a job position as a manager of mechanical production. In May of 2010, Adele was recognized for fifty years of loyal service with the National Society of The Daughters of the American Revolution on the Michigan Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Adele was preceded in death by her son Frank Harvey Watry, her sister Alice Anne Ayers Krautter, her parents, Edgar Harvey Ayers and Emma Laurena Marsh Ayers.

Adele was survived by her brother Fred H. Ayers of Texas, daughters Terry Kay (Rob) Pritchard of Michigan, Marsha Ann (Robert William) Semrinec of Florida; grandchildren Angela Pritchard (John Skopec), Justin (Becky) Pritchard, Amanda (Joshua) Duley, Brian Marsh Semrinec; great grandchildren Rebekka Benjamin (Kodi Beckman), Tyler Skopec, Luke, Calton, and Daniel Duley, Laura Walter, and one in the oven; great- great grandchildren Oakley and Brylee Beckman.

Per Adele's wishes, no memorial services will be held. Adele will be greatly missed by her family and friends.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services, Niles. Please share a memory or a message online: halbritterwickens.com.

Carol J. Young

May 8, 1946
March 20, 2025

Carol Jean Young,78, of Cassopolis, went to be with her Lord, March 20,2025. Her life began May 8, 1946 in Mishawaka, the first of six children. She married Clyde "Butch" Young Sr. on July 11, 1969 in Jones, Michigan.

Carol loved to cook, bake, sew and spend time in her garden. Her and her husband Butch could often be found traveling the country together on their Honda Goldwing. Carol and her family spent many weekends camping and canoeing especially on the Pine River. Recently, she found joy by doing meals on wheels with her sister and Thursday afternoon Euchre with her church friends. Her biggest joy was being a mom, grandma, and great grandma. Her greatest loves were her husband of thirty- nine years and her Savior, Jesus Christ.

Carol will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by six daughters, Cheryl (David) Knepple of Vandalia, Mary (Michael Jackson) Brooks of Jackson, Julie (Malcolm) Hooker of Constantine, Sara (Steve) Lattuca of Naples Florida, Laura (Larry) Brewer of Dowagiac, her adopted great-grandchildren, Kierra (Cayden) Schlabach of Cassopolis; one son, JJ Young of Cassopolis; five grandchildren, Brandi, Terra, Josh, Blake, Morgan; twelve great grandchildren; five sisters, Linda (Robert) Brossman of Vandalia, Barbara (Paul) Mrozek of Vandalia, Christenne (Kenneth) Hodges of Hermansville, Rachel Russey of Elkhart, Becky (Keith) Beers of Vandalia, a host of nieces and nephews and her loving dog companion Maya. She was preceded in death by her husband Clyde "Butch" Young Sr., son, Clyde D. Young Jr., grandson, Terry Lee Knepple, still born son, Max Eugene Young and her parents.

Family and friends will gather for a Celebration of life in Elkhart East Christian Church 21851 Co Rd 4, Bristol, IN 46507, on Saturday, March 29, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. Carol will be laid to rest in Shavehead cemetery at a later date.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Carol be made to Dog Town Resort 11925 Co Rd 10, Middlebury, IN 46540 or Elkhart East Christian Church, 21851 Co Rd 4, Bristol, IN 46507.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or message online: wagnercares.com.

Kenneth Eugene Purlee

May 9, 1939
- March 12, 2025

Kenneth Eugene Purlee, 85, of Burr Oak, died peacefully Wednesday, March 12, 2025 in the comfort of his family's presence.

His life began May 9, 1939 in Dowagiac, Michigan, the youngest of four children born to William and Margaret Purlee. He married JoAnne Culp November 24, 1961 in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Ken served honorably in the U.S. Navy serving aboard the USS Forrestal. He loved the Lord and he loved his family and served as a mentor to those new in Christian faith. Beside spending time with the family, he enjoyed golfing, fishing, and woodworking.

Ken will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his wife of sixty-three years, JoAnne Purlee; one daughter, Ann (Thomas) Darrington; one son, Gregory (Tonya) Purlee; ten grandchildren, Valli (BJ) Mallen, Jeffrey (Melody) Wright, Thomas (Rosa) Darrington, Aaron Purlee, Jenna (Jacob) Fulton, Robin (Tom) Beal, Tracy Purlee, Corey (Megan) Block, Tyler (Kerri Doutlick) Block, Marshall Block; fifteen great grandchildren; one brother, George (Bonnie) Purlee; one brother-in-law, Jerry (Karen) Culp; one sister-in-law, Patricia (Bert) Anderson; and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; two brothers, William Purlee, James Purlee; and one sister-in-law, Darlene Purlee.

Ken will be laid to rest beside his family in a private ceremony in Prospect Hill Cemetery in Cassopolis where he will be accorded Military Honors.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain - Philippians 1:21

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Ken's life Saturday, April 5, 2025 at 11:30 a.m. in Living Hope Fellowship, 600 North Nottawa Street, Sturgis, Michigan.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints - Psalms 116:15

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Kathryne Lee Randle

July 13, 1994
- March 19, 2025

Kathryne Lee Randle, of Battle Creek, died peacefully Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

Her life began July 13, 1944 in Battle Creek, Michigan, one of four children born to Jack and Lois Randle.

Kathryne had a passion for flower gardening. She had a special place in her heart for roses and irises. She enjoyed having a pet companion throughout her life. She frequented several churches in the Battle Creek area. Kathryne enjoyed her independence and lived her life unapologetically on her own terms.

Kathryne will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by one sister, Marylynne Zeunik of King's Mountain, North Carolina; one niece, Sandra Davis of Martin; one nephew, Todd Koopmans of Fremont; and a host of nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, one sister and one brother.

The family will observe a private remembrance.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Ask Us About Our Pre-Need Plans
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269-663-5345
Paul E. Mayhew, Owner

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Teens charged in stolen firearms case

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

CASSOPOLIS — Two teens were charged Monday in connection to a Cassopolis hardware store robbery, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 3 p.m. Monday, the Cass County Drug Enforcement Team, the Cass County Sheriff's Office and the Cassopolis Police Department conducted a traffic stop of a vehicle in a parking lot on School Street in Cassopolis. Detectives had information that the subjects in this vehicle were in possession of stolen firearms. Jacob M. Morrison, 18, of Cassopolis, and a 17-year-old male, whose name is currently being withheld, were detained and questioned. Several stolen firearms and ammunition from a break-in at Hayden & Sons Hardware Store, 125 S. Broadway St., Cassopolis, in January 2025, were recovered at the scene.

Morrison was later arrested and charged with possession of stolen firearms. The 17-year-old male was charged with breaking and entering and possession of stolen firearms and was released to his parent.

This case is still under investigation. The Cass County Sheriff's Office is asking the public, if you have any information about this matter, please call the Tip Line. 1 (800) 462-9328.

CROSSWORD ANSWER
From Page 5

R	U	B		E	R	O	S		O	D	E	S
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N	I	L	E		T	O	M	E		S	L	Y
S	L	E	D		S	E	E	D		S	O	X

SUDOKU ANSWER
From Page 5

9	2	3	6	5	1	8	4	7
8	5	6	2	7	4	9	1	3
1	7	4	9	8	3	2	6	5
6	3	7	4	9	5	1	8	2
5	4	8	3	1	2	7	9	6
2	1	9	7	6	8	3	5	4
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4	8	1	5	3	7	6	2	9
3	9	5	1	2	6	4	7	8

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Police investigate fatal crash in Buchanan

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

BUCHANAN — One person was killed in a single vehicle crash Wednesday morning in Buchanan, according to the Berrien County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 2:44 a.m. Wednesday, a Berrien County Sheriff's Deputy observed a red SUV traveling in the wrong lane on Front Street in Buchanan. The deputy attempted to stop the vehicle by activating his emergency lights as the vehicle was turning southbound on S. Redbud Trail. The vehicle failed to stop and continued south on Redbud Trail at a high rate of speed pulling away from the deputy. The driver lost control and went airborne as the vehicle crossed the railroad tracks, causing him to strike a tree before crashing into a house off S. Redbud Trail near Hobart Street.

The driver was the sole occupant of the vehicle and was pronounced deceased at the scene of the crash. The name of the driver is being withheld at this time pending notification of the family. No one from the residence that was struck was injured.

The Berrien County Sheriff's Office has requested the Michigan State Police to conduct an investigation into the crash. The MSP Traffic Crash Reconstruction Team will be conducting the crash investigation.

MSP trooper involved in Niles Township crash

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A Michigan State Police trooper was involved in a traffic crash with another vehicle Tuesday night, according to a MSP news release.

Preliminary investigation shows the trooper, driving a fully marked patrol vehicle, rear-ended a Nissan Rogue traveling north on S. 11th St. in Niles Township responding to an emergency call. Neither lights nor siren were activated.

Both the trooper and driver of the Nissan Rogue were wearing seatbelts and reported only minor injuries.

The crash remains under investigation and will be forwarded to the prosecutor's office for review once complete.

Brandon E. Roach appointed Notre Dame vice president

COMMUNITY REPORT

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — University of Notre Dame President Rev. Robert A. Dowd, C.S.C., announced that Brandon E. Roach has been appointed vice president and Robert K. Johnson General Counsel effective June 1. Roach's appointment follows an extensive national search.

A Notre Dame alumnus, Roach succeeds Marianne Corr, who has served in the role since 2008. In fall 2024, Corr announced her plans to retire at the end of the academic year.

Roach currently serves as executive associate general counsel for the University, a position he has held since 2023. He joined the Office of General Counsel as an assistant general counsel in 2010, and prior to that, served as senior adviser to the University's provost.

In his current role, he serves as the principal attorney for the Office of the Provost, the Athletics Department and the Department of Development, handling a wide range of issues including those related to academic policy and governance, strategic initiatives, major commercial and charitable transactions, employment matters, athletic affairs and litigation management.

He also advises University leaders on statutory, regulatory and legislative issues.

"I am deeply grateful to the search committee comprised of Trustees and University leaders that helped me identify Brandon as the best possible choice for this critical role from among a terrific pool of candidates. His breadth of legal experience, understanding of the higher education landscape and deep knowledge of Notre Dame make him ideally suited to serve as our next vice president and general counsel," Father Dowd said. "A gifted and visionary leader who is deeply committed to Notre Dame's mission, he will be an invaluable adviser to me, to our Board of Trustees and to the senior leadership of the University. I look forward to working closely with Brandon in this new role."

Roach, for his part, expressed gratitude for the opportunity.

"Higher education faces a period of profound challenge and change, but with that also comes tremendous opportunity," Roach said. "Notre Dame will thrive in this transformational era by being true to its distinctive mission while simultaneously bringing its strengths and uniqueness to bear on the pressing questions of our times."

He continued, "With humility and deep gratitude to Father Dowd and the University for the privilege and responsibility of serving as general counsel, I look forward to joining with him and the entire Notre Dame family in the important work of being a force for good in our world. I am also indebted to Marianne Corr for her example and legacy, and the strength of the foundation she has established for the Office of General Counsel's future."

Roach studied government and sociology at Notre Dame, graduating summa cum laude in 1999. He earned his law degree from Yale Law School, where he was an editor of the Yale Law Journal and a member of its admissions committee. He clerked for Judge Julia Smith Gibbons of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit, from 2003 to 2004, and later worked as an associate in the appellate group of a major Houston law firm.

He has served in critical roles with multiple leadership teams since returning to Notre Dame.

As senior adviser to the provost, he coordinated strategic academic initiatives in collaboration with associate provosts, deans, department chairs and other stakeholders and advised the provost on the development of academic and University policy. He also staffed the Academic Affairs committee of the Board of Trustees.

As associate and later executive associate general counsel, he designed and implemented the University's compliance framework and offered support to Development and Athletics during significant periods of transition and growth. He also served as co-chair of the External Engagement Strategic Advisory Committee as part of the University's strategic framework planning initiative.

Roach was born and raised in Louisiana. His wife, Clare, earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Notre Dame, the latter as a graduate teaching fellow with the University's Alliance for Catholic Education. She currently serves as associate director of the Notre Dame Robinson Community Learning Center. They have four children together: Jeremiah, a third-year college student; Jude, a first-year college student; Marie, a high school junior; and Daniel, a 7th grader.

The Office of General Counsel provides comprehensive legal services and strategic counsel in support of the University's mission and operations. For more information, visit generalcounsel.nd.edu.

HEART

Continued from page A1

care in their care plan. Temporary respite homes provide the break foster, adoptive and kinship families need to recharge and continue caring for kids in care. Respite care lasts as little as a half-a-day and up to five consecutive days. The length of the respite stay is agreed upon before placement.

Respite family homes undergo the same licensing process as foster homes which includes paperwork, training, background checks, and home visits to ensure safety and preparedness.

Driven by a desire for supporting foster, adoptive and kinship families, Heart for Home was founded with the core belief that every foster, adoptive and kinship family deserves unwavering support and respite care. Since its launch two years ago, Heart for Home has expanded to serve 19 counties in west and southwest Michigan, including Berrien and Cass Counties.

Currently, Heart for Home has one respite family in Cass County and two in Berrien County and is actively moving to increase those numbers.

"Even if you haven't been in a situation like that, just imagine having to suddenly, for some reason, lose everything you're familiar with," said Julia Carey, a Heart for Home Recruiter and Family Support Coordinator for Berrien and Cass County. "Depending on what age you are, that can be really tough. Kids crave consistency and for them to have to be uprooted from all things familiar, is a loss. They have to get used to a whole different family culture."

She went on to share, "Yes, respite care is an investment of time. When you think about that and then you think about how you spend your time, we only live once. We can't take back the time that we have, right? So why not invest in the lives of these precious children?"

Foster care is near and dear to O'Carey's heart, having fostered and adopted her youngest daughter.

"We went through that process and so we know how important respite and support are for people who are caring for children from hard places, because it's not easy," she said. "It's rewarding, but it's incredibly intensive. It's a journey when you take a child who has gone through loss and abuse and oftentimes exhibits all sorts of behaviors because they're just hurting inside. You have to surround them with love and help them learn coping skills and a healthy way of thinking. It's great, but you need support and that's why I love Heart for Home."

The program also hosts events to create a sense of community among foster families. Earlier this month, O'Carey partnered with Andrews University and several organizations to host an action screening of "Sound of Hope" – a film adapting the true story of 22 families from the rural Bennett Missionary Baptist Church who came together to adopt 77 kids in the foster care system – at Andrews University. Information on foster care, adoption, respite care, with a question and answer panel, reception and exhibits followed the film.

According to O'Carey, approximately 165 people attended the event.

"People asked real questions and it was a lively discussion," O'Carey said. "After that, we had a beautiful reception and people got to know the area organizations like Michiana Family Center, DHHS, and Heart for Home, so it was a success."

Heart for Home aims to provide a loving environment and guidance for foster families, addressing issues such as abuse, neglect, and Post-traumatic stress.

The organization also also aims to bring awareness of the struggles of foster children.

"Sometimes people think (foster children only consist of) kids of drug addicts, certain ethnicities or the underprivileged," she said. " But it can be a full gambit of kids. From our refugee and immigrant children, whose parents had to get deported and they were born here or the parents went through trauma and they don't know how to deal with the kids because they have their own issues, there can be a number of reasons why children need to be temporarily cared for."

O'Carey said that a little more than 50 percent of foster children get reunited with their families.

"It's our goal to be as supportive as possible in any way," she said. These children have so much potential. They need to be treated like normal kids who need love, care, safety, good education and all the basics, just like any other kid. It's important for us to do whatever we can to best serve the children. I invite this community to join us in these efforts."

Readers interested in learning more about how to donate funds for support events that help foster children heal from trauma, volunteer, or how to become a respite home can visit heartforhome.info or contact Julia O'Carey at jocarey@h4hmi.org.

SCHOOL

Continued from page A1

board also approved the purchase of a new bus from the Holland Bus Company at a cost of $171,878. Though final board approval was needed based on the cost, the expense had already been included in previous budget amendments. The district is continuing work to phase out buses as needed for safety, to update the fleet, and to minimize wear by exploring options such as smaller buses for transporting athletic teams.

Also approved was the district's future participation in the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency (RESA) Mathematics & Science Center after the implementation of in-district Advanced Placement (AP) programs. The discussion focused on assuring that EPS had the appropriate teachers and resources to provide the most opportunity for students. It was noted that the district already has teaching staff hired and trained in AP and that students currently in those programs have outperformed those at the Math & Science Center. In the end, the board opted to approve the incoming freshman class as the last cohort to have the option apply for the RESA program. They, along with any other students currently enrolled at the Center, will be able to attend through graduation.

Schools of Choice tuition rates for 2025-2026 were approved, pending the final dollar amount pending decisions in the Michigan Legislature. The rates will be set at a minimum of the current rate of $9,608, with a possibility of increase closer to $10,000. The new rates would apply only to new incoming students, with currently enrolled students keeping the current rate.

The board approved bids from The Skillman Corporation for improvements to multiple buildings, based on last year's bond approval. Renovations include flooring, bathrooms, secure vestibules, and asbestos removal. Additional improvements, including a pick up and drop off drive loop, will be brought before the board in the future.

Board member Chelsea Wilson was recognized for achieving Level 3 in Michigan Association of School Boards Board Member Certification education.

"It normally takes someone being elected multiple times to achieve level 3," noted Szucs.

Also recognized were teachers Elisa Laskowski and Melissa Shemanski, for their work as special needs instructors and in developing work readiness programs for students, including a past program growing herbs and vegetables to be used by school Food Service and for the student operated Coffee Cabin, offering students experience in making and serving coffee, tea, hot cocoa and in various business and workplace responsibilities.

Assistant to the Athletic Director and the Assistant Principal at Edwardsburg High School, Tina Cripe, was also recognized as the March Support Staff Member of the Month for her dedication to students and community members.

"I am not sure that people know all that Tina does behind the scenes to make sure that our student athletes and coaches have great seasons. Tina never looks for acknowledgement even though she does so much," read Szucs from the comments from nominators.

The next regular The Edwardsburg Public School Board will take place on April 28 at 7pm in the District Administrative Center.

> "I am not sure that people know all that Tina does behind the scenes to make sure that our student athletes and coaches have great seasons. Tina never looks for acknowledgement even though she does so much."
>
> **— Superintendent Dr. Courtney Szucs**

DIRECTOR

Continued from page A1

with a local match of $108,923 for a total construction cost of $500,000, which are eligible to be used on existing federal aid eligible roads in the city. MDOT will be administering the funds and the city is required to follow MDOT design and construction guidelines. Due to the project design and construction engineering requirements, material testing, wage rate audits, etc., the DPW staff is unable to commit the necessary hours to administer the project.

Requests for proposals were sought by the DPW and two bids were received. Wightman and Associates of Benton Harbor was the low bidder for the proposed design and construction engineering cost of $57,020, including the Geotechnical Analysis, NEPA and SHPO requirements. Design and construction engineering costs are not eligible to be paid for with the use of STU/STP funds.

The council accepted a quote in the amount of $4,550.98 from We Build Fun of Allen, Texas for the replacement of a slide at Eastside Park.

Late last year, one of the slides located at Eastside Park had been damaged and was removed because it was no longer safe. After contacting the slide manufacture, the city was informed that due to the age of the play structure, the existing slide is obsolete and can no longer be ordered. A similar slide could be retrofitted by removing and reinstalling the original support posts and foundations. Installation will be completed by the Street Department and the cost of the slide charged to Park's Repairs and Maintenance account.

Council also approved the renewal of the surcharge placed on customers' electric bills in accordance with Michigan's Low-Income Energy Assistance Program.

The Michigan House and Senate passed legislation on June 18, 2013, that created the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. This bill allowed the Michigan Public Service Commission to create a funding factor each year that would raise at least $50 million statewide. The funding factor could not exceed $1 per electric meter and not more than $1 per household per month.

New legislation in 2024 – PA 168 and 169 of 2024 – amended several low-income energy requirements from public utilities. The $50 million cap was removed. The funding factor cap is now placed at $2 per meter with a 2025 maximum of $1.25 increasing $0.25 each year. The revenue, to the extent possible, will be returned to our geographical "area," with no definition of what that is.

The attorney general or any single Niles customer may now sue the city if it fails to meet the requirements of Section 12 in the act and the retail meter count will continue across all customer classes, including multiple meters except for residential, which continues at no more than one meter per site.

By opting in, Niles retains less local control of funds collected from customers and allows the state to determine the surcharge rate. However, there will be no new administrative burdens on Niles' DPW staff and it would allow time to gather data and evaluate how the state program is benefiting customers.

If the city had opted out of the program, it would have been required to develop and administer a local program that is consistent with state requirements. While this would have allowed Niles to retain local control of collected funds, it would have created a significant increase in new administrative responsibility for staff having to create and run a program while adding additional annual reporting requirements.

Last year's revenue to the state was $70,470.05 with 6,674 customers (meters) being surcharged and approximately $114,000 was returned to the Niles area.

"Under this new legislation, there is no guarantee that the money's been coming back to the local jurisdiction or where the monies were raised," Huff said. "We obviously did a little bit better and I don't know how they identified more monies to flow into this area than what was collected in this area, but I am a little concerned about going forward about where the monies may end up."

Also Monday:

• The council accepted the proposal from Kirk M. Proshwitz of Buchanan in the amount of $30,000 for the 2026 July 4th Fireworks Display, charging the expense to Community Promotions.

• Council approved a commitment to order 750 tons of bulk rock salt for the 2025-2026 winter season through MiDEAL, at a price unknown at this time, charge the expense to the Major Streets budget.

• Council approved 6-1 the request of LifePlan to conduct the hero Run 5K/10K on April 26, 2025, as presented with staff recommendations. Fourth ward councilmember Michael Thompson cast the lone dissenting vote, stating he does not believe the city should contribute funds or in-kind services toward events.

• Council adopted a resolution authorizing DART to submit the FY 2025 MDOT Regular Services Program Application.

• Council accepted the quote from Rooftech Construction, of New Carlisle, Indiana in the amount of $9,970, plus $45.00 per sheet of decking, to replace the roof at 1332 Oak Street, Niles, with expenses being paid for through the Help for Homes program.

The program assists income-qualified homeowners in making health and safety improvements to residential single-family properties. Households participating in this program must not exceed 80 percent of median income based on household size. Repairs funded through this program must address emergency health and safety conditions.

By providing repairs to targeted homeowners, the Home Repair Program adds to the overall revitalization of the city by reducing blight, providing safe and improved housing, and bolstering the aesthetic and economic value of the targeted neighborhoods. It is a direct outcome of the Niles-Buchanan Regional Strategic Plan.

• Council approved the entering into a Memorandum of Understanding for Administrative Services between the City of Niles and The City of Niles DDA Main Street.

TALK

Continued from page A2

developing a vacant house ordinance.

He noted that there are a number of ways that the city can incentivize development, through such tools as the use of brownfield development authorities and housing tax increment financing as well as bringing back the Downtown Development Authority.

City Manager Tony McGhee told commissioners that the full report prepared by the Cornerstone Alliance will be posted on the city's website for people to peruse.

As for the last item Haan mentioned, having an active DDA, commissioners had a further discussion about bringing back the DDA later in the meeting. Although no formal vote was taken, commissioners all spoke in favor of re-establishing the DDA that was disbanded in 2020.

"I'm ecstatic," Commissioner Dan Vigansky said during the discussion. He has been pushing fellow commissioners and city staff to bring back the DDA for several months.

"I'm just over the moon, I want this to go forward," he added. "People were so misled in the past. I want anybody who applies to move on from that past history."

Weedon agreed. "This is an opportunity to move forward," he said. "Today's meeting is a prime example of what we can do. We can see that others have an interest in Buchanan. This is another opportunity to re-establish what had been dismantled."

Weedon urged residents and business owners interested in serving on the new DDA to fill out an application. Once a group of people are selected to serve, the next steps will be to write new bylaws and a new DDA ordinance.

City Clerk Kalla Langston-Weiss said the DDA application form will be on the city website as well as available at City Hall. The DDA board is required to have some members who are downtown business owners and can also have other members from other parts of the city and surrounding area.

Monday's city commission meeting featured action on other items as well. The city is applying for two grants for recreational projects in advance of April 1 deadlines.

The bigger of the two projects is for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant to pay for the next phase in Riverfront Park improvements for a fishing platform and restrooms. The city is asking for up to $400,000 and will match it with $150,000 in local funds.

The city is also applying for a Recreation Passport grant to pay for new playground equipment and other improvements to Kathryn Park. The city is asking for $150,000 and will match it with $150,000 in local funds.

Commissioners approved a new rental housing ordinance, set registration/inspection fees and a moratorium on short term rentals. The purpose of the new rental housing ordinance is to promote public safety and information about the ordinance, fees and moratorium will be disseminated in the community, McGhee said.

The fees for long term rentals is $35 per unit per year, while the fee for short term rentals is $125 per unit per year. The long term rental fees go into effect July 1, while the short term rental fees will go into effect 15 days from Monday. Short term rentals currently operating will be grandfathered in.

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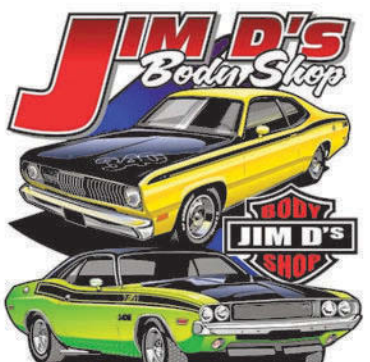

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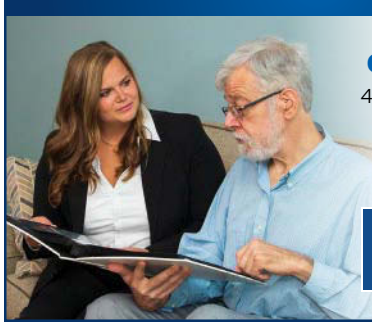
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WRESTLING

Dowagiac's Bailey named 2nd team All-Great Midwest

COMMUNITY REPORT

ASHLAND, Oh. — Ashland University head coach Colt Sponseller and freshman 141-pounder Brock Durbin lead the list of Eagles honored by the Great Midwest Athletic Conference on Thursday (March 27) afternoon, as the circuit's 2024-25 wrestling season awards were released.

Sponseller is the Great Midwest Coach of the Year for the third time, while Durbin is the Eagles' first Great Midwest Freshman of the Year.

Ashland wrestling has won four of five Great Midwest tournament titles since joining the league, and Sponseller has guided the Eagles in all four of those championships. At the 2025 Championship, Ashland earned 159.5 points, 35.5 ahead of second-place Tiffin.

Durbin was the conference runner-up at 141 pounds, qualified for the NCAA Division II Championships in his first season on the collegiate mats, and ended with a record of 23-17.

Honored by the conference for winning their respective weight classes at the conference championships were sophomore 149-pounder Hayden Kuhn, junior 174-pounder Sevriano Garza, and sophomore 184-pounder Peyton Lemon.

Second-team all-conference Eagles, for their runner-up conference placements, are sophomore 125-pounder Luke Acuna, Durbin, senior 197-pounder Kaine Morris and junior 285-pounder Wyatt Bailey.

SOCCER

Dowagiac girls soccer ties 3-3 with Sturgis

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

STURGIS — The Dowagiac girls soccer team played to a 2-2 tie Wednesday at Sturgis.

Chloe Brewer and Johannah McDonald each scored a goal and Airreana Morse added an assist.

"We played a decent game today," said Dowagiac coach Joseph Pasternak. "We started the first half playing our game moving the ball well and playing as a unit. In the second half, we kind of self-destructed and fell into their game playing too fast and too forward. We made some mistakes that they capitalized on and it really shifted the momentum of the game.

Pasternak was happy with the way his team battled in its second game of the season.

"Sturgis was a fast and physical team and we ran well with them," he said. "We just need to learn how to win those close games. We had plenty of chances to finish the game and come away with a win. Overall, I'm happy with our play today but need to work on the mental part of the game and stop beating ourselves."

Dowagiac (1-0-1) will face Michigan Lutheran at 5 p.m. Monday, April 7 at Michigan Lutheran.

Dowagiac 8, Hartford 0

The Dowagiac girls soccer team kicked off the season in winning fashion with a 8-0 victory over Hartford Friday, March 21.

Johanna McDonald had five goals and an assist, Sabina Sanchez-Ortega had two goals, Mia Freeman had one goal and two assists, Chloe Brewer had two assists and Alivia Bell one assist.

"We played a pretty good first game," said Dowagiac coach Joseph Pasternak. "We moved the ball well and didn't try to force things and let the game come to us. We could do a little better with the accuracy of our passes but the girls were doing the right things and making good decisions all game long. We just need to clean some things up. Overall I was happy with our performance today and hope to build off this game."

BASKETBALL

SMC signs Summers out of Tennessee

COMMUNITY REPORT

DOWAGIAC — Qimara-Lisa Summers of Northeast High School in Clarksville, Tennessee, has signed her NJCAA Letter of Intent to play women's basketball in 1st Source Bank Fieldhouse for Coach Jay Jenkins and the Roadrunners starting in Fall 2025.

"Q is very athletic and wants to win," said Northeast Coach Tracie Mason-Blair. "With continuous hard work and dedication, Q is going to be an asset to the Roadrunners. I look forward to seeing her do great things at the next level."

"Q is a flat out scorer," Jenkins added. "She will be a green light."

Summers is the fifth member of the 2025 SMC Women's Basketball recruiting class, joining Trinity Dale of Mishawaka, Cooper Roberts of Brownstown, CaSaundra

See SIGNS, Page B3

BASKETBALL

BRANDYWINE'S SEASON ENDS IN 31-29 LOSS TO ARBOR PREP

By SCOTT HASSINGER
Leader Publications Contributor

EAST LANSING — Emotions ran high following Brandywine's heartbreaking 31-29 Division 3 state semifinal loss in girls' basketball Thursday, March 20 to Ypsilanti Arbor Prep at Michigan State University's Jack Breslin Center.

It marked the second straight year that Arbor Prep has ended Brandywine's season. The Gators edged the top-ranked Lady Bobcats 33-30 in the 2024 state championship game as well.

Arbor Prep (16-12) advances to Saturday's state finals at 4 p.m. against Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest (22-6).

Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest defeated Calumet (23-6) in the other semifinal. Brandywine's season ends at 27-1.

Arbor Prep, which is making a bid to win its third state crown under current head coach Scott Stine, who is 158-47 in eight years as head coach, and fourth title overall.

With the game tied at 29-29, Arbor Prep's Angela Meggisson was fouled with two seconds left in the game. Meggisson calmly made both attempts to seal Brandywine's fate.

After what Brandywine fans deemed a questionable call that sent Meggisson to the stripe, the Lady Bobcats inbounded the ball past mid-court and attempted one final shot that missed the mark.

> "There are all kinds of calls throughout a 32-minute game that can happen. It looks worse when it's at the end and decides a semifinal game, but that's not the reason we lost today. The game officials are here for a reason because they are very good at what they do so give them credit."
>
> — Coach Josh Hood

"There are all kinds of calls throughout a 32-minute game that can happen. It looks worse when it's at the end and decides a semifinal game, but that's not the reason we lost today. The game officials are here for a reason because they are very good at what they do so give them credit. I'm not going to blame us losing on that. If we had made a couple more three pointers or get more stops against their athletic zone that we might've won," Hood said.

The Lady Bobcats' latest bid to earn the school's first state girls' basketball title was hard to swallow for 16th year head coach Josh Hood and his Lady Bobcats, who were led by its seven seniors.

That senior group of Miley Young, Adelyn Drotoz, Adeline Gill, Paige Krisher, Ireland Prenkert, Niyah Mason and Lexi Troup helped lead Brandywine to a record of 53-3 the past two seasons, including one state runners-up finish, a pair of Final Four appearances, two district titles, two regional crowns and a pair of Lakeland Conference titles.

An emotional Hood struggled afterwards to find the right words to sum up what the Brandywine seniors have meant to the Bobcats' program the past four years.

"I'm just so frustrated right now because of all the hard work this group has put in only to fall short. This group of seniors will go down as one of the best ever here at Brandywine," Hood said.

Brandywine's undersized squad prided itself on its defense and an ability to box out bigger opponents to compensate for its lack of size during its previous 27 games.

The game essentially came down to rebounding, though, where Arbor Prep held a dominating 33-15 edge on the glass over Brandywine.

See ENDS, Page B3

PHOTO COURTESY OF TANYA HAGEN

FENCING

ND fencing wins 14th NCAA Championship

COMMUNITY REPORT

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. – Notre Dame is back on top of the college fencing world, winning the 14th NCAA team national championship in program history on Sunday, March 23. The Irish have now won four of the last five team national titles.

The fencing program's 14th national title represents the most by any team in Notre Dame athletics history. The national title gives the Fighting Irish 36 team national championships in athletics. Notre Dame moves into a tie for second place with Penn State for most fencing national titles in NCAA history.

The title gives Notre Dame head coach Gia Kvaratskhelia his sixth NCAA national championship during his tenure at Notre Dame. The six titles are the most by any Notre Dame head coach in school history, passing the legendary fencing coach Mike DeCicco, who won five titles with the Irish.

The Irish finished with 183 points over the four days, winning the title by 11 over second place Columbia/Barnard (172). Impressively, Notre Dame scored more points than every other program on both the men's and women's sides.

Notre Dame wasn't done collecting hardware after wrapping up the team title in the morning session. The Irish added two individual titles in the afternoon, as Eszter Muhari (epee) and Magda Skarbonkiewicz (sabre) each captured NCAA individual titles.

With the two titles on Sunday and Chase Emmer's foil individual championship on Friday, the Notre Dame fencing program now has 48 individual NCAA titles. The women have won 26 individual titles in program history. Eight of the individual titles have come from women's epee and seven from women's sabre.

Muhari's title was her second individual NCAA championship, also winning in 2023. The epeeist is the sixth Notre Dame women's fencer in history to win multiple individual titles. Muhari was perfect and absolutely dominant over the two days, going undefeated in round-robin action with a record of 23-0.

She carried her form into the semifinal knockout rounds, defeating Princeton's Leehi Machulsky by a score of 15-2 to advance to the title bout. In the final, Muhari dispatched Columbia's Tierna Oxenreider by a score of 15-13 to earn the gold.

In women's sabre it was an all Irish final, as Skarbonkiewicz and Siobhan Sullivan advanced out of pool play and won their semifinal matchups to set up the showdown between the freshmen teammates. Skarbonkiewicz was the No. 1 seed after going 21-1 in prelims while Sullivan grabbed the No. 3 seed with a 16-6 record.

Skarbonkiewicz defeated Princeton's Alexandra Lee in the semifinal by a score of 15-8 and Sullivan cruised to a 15-9 victory over Ohio State's Natalia Botello. Skarbonkiewicz came out on top in the final, defeating Sullivan by a final of 15-8 to win the title.

In other action on the final day of the championships, Kaylin Hsieh earned a fifth place finish in epee, posting a record of 16-7 to complete her strong showing. In women's foil Ariadna Tucker placed 13th and Rebeca Candescu came in at 16th.

STANDINGS

Epee

1. Eszter Muhari, 23-0 (+68)
5. Kaylin Hsieh, 16-7 (+38)

Sabre

1. Magda Skarbonkiewicz, 21-1 (+62)
2. Siobhan Sullivan, 16-6 (+33)

Foil

13. Ariadna Tucker, 11-12 (+8)
16. Rebeca Candescu, 9-14 (-11)

Team standings

1. Notre Dame (183)
2. Columbia/Barnard (172)
3. Harvard (141)
4. Princeton (141)
5. St. John's (95)

BASKETBALL

Hidalgo Named Wade, Naismith Trophy Finalist

COMMUNITY REPORT

ATLANTA — The accolades keep coming for an Irish backcourt headed to the Sweet 16 this week.

On Tuesday, the Women's Basketball Coaches' Association named Hannah Hidalgo a finalist for the Wade Trophy, which is given by the organization to the nation's best player in college women's basketball. She was also named a finalist for the Naismith Trophy, given by the Atlanta Tip Off Club to the nation's best women's player.

Additionally, Sonia Citron and Olivia Miles were named finalists for this season's 10-member WBCA NCAA Division I Coaches' All-America Team.

Hidalgo is pacing the Irish this season on both ends of the court. She leads the team with 24.1 points and 3.7 steals per game, marks that both rank fourth in the nation.

The 5-6 guard has already re-written portions of the Irish record book, too. At the ACC Tournament, Hidalgo joined Irish legend Arike Ogunbowale as the only players in Notre Dame history to post multiple 700-point seasons. She also has 115 steals this year, the sophomore record. It is just the fourth time in program history a Notre Dame player has had a 100-steal season. Hidalgo did it last year as well (160).

Miles is averaging 15.5 points, 5.8 rebounds and 5.9 assists per game. She is the only player in the nation averaging 15-5-5 while shooting greater than 40 percent from deep. In the last 15 years, Iowa's Caitlin Clark and Oregon's Sabrina Ionescu are the only other players to achieve that feat.

Additionally, Miles leads the nation with three triple-doubles this season and became the first player in ACC history with back-to-back triple-doubles (Loyola and Virginia). Her 20-point triple-double in Notre Dame's opener against Mercyhurst came on the heels of a year off while rehabbing a torn ACL, making her the first player in NBA, WNBA or college basketball player in history to sit out for a year due to injury and post a 20-point triple-double in their first game back.

Citron has quietly stuffed the stat sheet nearly every time she takes the floor this year. She is posting 14.2 points, 5.4 rebounds and 2.7 assists per game. In the last 10 games, those numbers jump to 16.7 points and 5.8 rebounds with a 55.6 success rate from the floor.

SPRING SPORTS SCORES

FRIDAY, MARCH 21

Baseball
Edwardsburg 5, Decatur 3
Edwardsburg 9, Decatur 1
Girls soccer
Harper Creek 8, Edwardsburg 0

MONDAY, MARCH 24

Girls soccer
Niles 3, Berrien Springs 0
Buchanan 8, Hartford 0
Michigan Lutheran 4, Brandywine 3

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

Baseball
Plainwell 6, Edwardsburg 5
Plainwell 4, Edwardsburg 2 (4)
Girls soccer
Marshall 5, Edwardsburg 0

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

Baseball
Watervliet 2, Dowagiac 0
Berrien Springs 3, Cassopolis 2
Brandywine 12, Constantine 10
St. Joseph 3, Edwardsburg 1
Softball
Dowagiac 4, St. Joseph 3 (8)
Dowagiac 7, St. Joseph 1
Edwardsburg 20, Plainwell 0
Edwardsburg 20, Plainwell 0
Girls soccer
St. Joseph 3, Edwardsburg 1
Niles 4, Buchanan 4
Bridgman 4, Brandywine 1

PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFF DOUGLAS

ENDS

Continued from page B1

"We knew coming in that Arbor Prep was very athletic and that they do a phenomenal job of attacking the glass. They have great athletes who are just so strong and physical and are good basketball players. We have 13 girls and enough depth in practice that we can really go at it and that's why we are so good. But we don't really have any girls who can simulate the kind of athleticism they possess. You have to give them credit because they manhandled us in the first half. I thought we did a much better job in the second half. We also knew it was going to be a one possession game. They've been here a bunch of times. Every possession has to count. We got a shot we wanted there at the end. That's basketball and things don't always go your way, but we play at the level that warrants success for our program," Hood said.

Hood did express his frustration afterwards with the dominance by private and parochial schools over public schools in postseason tournaments.

"We have 13 girls in our locker room who are really hurting bad right now. It's a group we have worked with and developed since they were Kindergartners in our Kiddie Cats' Program. I'm just being honest and speaking up and saying the current situation needs to be addressed. Speaking out about it doesn't make me a bad person, it's just honesty. No one likes to talk about it. It's not sour grapes because we lost the game itself today because we didn't make enough shots or get enough stops. These girls have busted their tails for the last 12 or 13 years to bring a state title back to our community only to have it taken away again," Hood said. I love our girls and I'll go to battle for them any time."

Arbor Prep, which was led in scoring by Meggisson's 12 points and nine from Eliza Bush, finished 11-of-36 (30.6 percent) and 5-of-9 (55.6 percent) at the charity stripe.

Brandywine finished the game shooting just 11-of-32 shots (34.4 percent) from the floor, including 4-of-18 from three-point territory, and 3-of-5 (60 percent) at the foul stripe.

Adeline Gill ended her career for the Lady Bobcasts with 16 points, five rebounds, two assists and one steal. Price added six points and two rebounds. Byrd had one point, two boards and three assists. Lily Gill contributed two boards and a pair of steals. Mason added two boards and Drotoz had three points, two assists and two steals.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TANYA HAGEN

The Lady Bobcats committed just eight turnovers and forced the Gators into 14.

Brandywine went into the locker room at halftime holding an eight-point lead, 17-9.

But Arbor Prep reeled off seven of the first eight points of the third quarter and took its first lead, 20-18, of the afternoon on Eliza Bush's triple. But Brandywine regained the lead 21-20 on Price's second triple of the day. Banks' layup gave Arbor Prep a 22-21 cushion going into the fourth quarter.

"She (Meggisson) is a Load to handle down low and they had some role players step up and hit a couple of huge shots for them in the second half. We didn't get too many offensive rebounds either and that had a lot to do with their defense. I don't think this game was ever a two-possession game. If we could've made a couple more threes than we'd probably be sitting up here a little happier," Hood said.

After the lead had flipflopped a couple times, Brandywine took a two-point lead on Drotoz's triple with 7:05 left. Karleigh Byrd was fouled and made the first of two charity tosses to give the Lady Bobcats a 27-24 edge with 5:03 left.

Annecia Clark drained a triple for Arbor Prep that tied the contest up once again at 27-27 with 4:01 left to play.

Adeline Gill's bucket from underneath gave Brandywine its final lead at 29-27 just before the three minute mark.

Meggison evened the contest at 29-29 shortly before she provided her late heroics at the foul stripe.

"Niles Brandywine is very good at denying the basketball. Their defensive pressure is very good. Both of our programs pride themselves on defense. Once we settled down in the second half we got opportunities against their pressure," Stine said. "At halftime I told our girls they had hearts of a champion. Rebounding was a definite factor for us today, especially in the final half."

Brandywine's pressure forced Arbor Prep into three turnovers during the opening period, including two that the Bobcats were able to get baskets off of."

Adeline Gill scored the Bobcats' first bucket of the game and followed it up just seconds later with a 5-foot jumper in the lane for a quick 4-0 lead. Sophomore Lily Gill drained a three pointer a short time later to give Brandywine a 9-5 lead after one quarter.

Adeline Gill scored twice in the post and added a free throw for Brandywine's first five points of the second quarter, increasing the Lady Bobcats' lead to nine, 14-5 with 5:59 left in the half. A triple by sophomore Mackenna Price at the 2:38 mark helped send the Bobcats into intermission with a 17-9 advantage.

Brandywine's defensive pressure forced Arbor Prep into a 3-of-22 shooting performance from the floor in the opening 16 minutes.

'Nobody talks about this'

Hood did express his frustration afterwards with the dominance by private and parochial schools over public schools in postseason tournaments.

"Nobody talks about this," Hood said. "I'm taking the high road, OK? The game was decided at the end. We needed to make shots; I'm not talking about the game itself. I'm just talking about the real problem we have here. Until somebody does something, it's not going to change.

"We have 13 girls in our locker room who are really hurting bad right now," Hood continued. "It's a group we have worked with and developed since they were Kindergartners in our Kiddie Cats' Program. I'm just being honest and speaking up and saying the current situation needs to be addressed. Speaking out about it doesn't make me a bad person, it's just honesty. No one likes to talk about it. It's not sour grapes because we lost the game itself today because we didn't make enough shots or get enough stops. These girls have busted their tails for the last 12 or 13 years to bring a state title back to our community only to have it taken away again. I love our girls and I'll go to battle for them any time."

YPSILANTI ARBOR PREP 31, BRANDYWINE 29

At Michigan State's Breslin Center

BRANDYWINE (29): Adeline Gill 7-10 2-3 16, Karleigh Byrd 0-1 1-2 1, Adelyn Drotoz 1-6 0-0 3, Lily Gill 1-10 0-0 3, Miley Young 0-2 0-0 0, Sydney Olson 0-0 0-0 0, Ireland Prenkert 0-0 0-0 0, Mackenna Price 2-3 0-0 6, Niyah Mason 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 11-32 3-5 29.

YPSILANTI ARBOR PREP (31): Angela Meggisson 4-10 4-8 12, Jalaya Banks 2-10 1-1 5, Eliza Bush 3-7 0-0 9, Jourdin Lewis 1-6 0-0 2, Madison Diarra 0-0 0-0 0, Anneica Clark 1-3 0-0 3. Totals 11-36 5-9 31.

Brandywine 9 17 21 29
Arbor Prep 5 9 22 31

3-point baskets: Brandywine 4-18 (Price 2-3, Drotoz 1-6, L. Gill 1-6, Young 0-2, Byrd 0-1), Ypsilanti Arbor Prep 4-13 (Bush 3-6, Clark 1-3, Lewis 0-3, Meggisson 0-1). Total fouls: Brandywine 9, Ypsilanti Arbor Prep 5. Records: Brandywine 27-1, Ypsilanti Arbor Prep 16-12

SIGNS

Continued from page B1

Smith of Warren and Diavian Robinson of Livonia.

In Jenkins' first season as coach and the program's second year back in intercollegiate competition after a 26-year hiatus, the 2023-2024 squad won the MCCAA Western Conference. The team then won the Great Lakes District B Tournament, earning a berth at the NJCAA National Championship in Joplin, Missouri, where they went 1-1, finishing the season at 27-5.

The past season ended in the District Semifinals with a 21-10 overall record. The Roadrunners were 9-5 in the Western Conference and fiercely defended home court, going 13-2 in the Fieldhouse. SMC set numerous school records along the way, including Team 2PT FG Made – Game (42), Team 3PT % - Game (61.5%), Team FT Made – Game (27), Team FT % - Game (27-30, 90.0%), Team Blocks – Game (6), Team Steals – Game (35) and Team Steals – Season (450).

Athletic directors indispensable to mission of school sports

COMMUNITY REPORT

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

LANSING —The Michigan High School Athletic Association began its first Bulletin of the 1943-44 school year by reviewing the previous year's accomplishments as World War II raged on multiple fronts. Eugene B. Elliott, the state's superintendent of public instruction, addressed "Those in Charge of Athletics in Michigan High Schools" with a challenge and a promise that "... your efforts to provide opportunities for physical development will enable thousands of high school students to take their places in a needy world."

Students of history know athletics were seen at that time primarily as a way to provide increased physical education and prepare students for a next step into the military. But read again today, with a little different context, Elliott's words seemingly still apply.

At the high school level alone, the MHSAA counts more than 700 athletic administrators guiding more than 170,000 student-athletes as they learn lessons from their athletic experiences that will help them contribute to the world in any variety of ways once their time in school sports is done.

A century ago, athletic administration still was handled primarily by district superintendents or high school principals. By the 1940s, "athletic director" was a role mentioned much more frequently – superintendents and principals found themselves taking on several other responsibilities, and school sports grew so quickly in participation and popularity that another administrator to lead those extracurriculars became increasingly necessary.

In 1958, the Michigan Association of Physical Education and Athletics was formed, and in 1982 renamed the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association. A close working relationship between the MHSAA and the state's athletic directors has long been integral to the success of school sports in Michigan, and the MIAAA and MHSAA continue to strive hand-in-hand. The MHSAA has celebrated its 100th anniversary throughout the 2024-25 school year, and a century after its start, the major focus of the organization is providing support – and appreciation – for the work done by administrators at the local level.

Expectations for school sports programs have never been higher, and athletic directors have never been valued more. Current MHSAA Executive Director Mark Uyl writes in this winter's benchmarks, "I am again reminded of how fortunate we are in Michigan to have so many athletic leaders across our diverse state who truly care about preserving and enhancing school sports for our young men and women."

And an expectation from the 1977 edition of the textbook "Administration of High School Athletics" – co-written by first fulltime MHSAA executive director Charles E. Forsythe – continues to ring true as well: "Many challenges will confront (the athletic administrator) because of uncertainties that exist today. Meeting these challenges will make (the administrator's) position in the school an even more important one."

NEWS

SMC grad following her bliss to picture-perfect career

COMMUNITY REPORT

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Morgan Adams graduates from SMC in 2016.

DOWAGIAC — Morgan Adams, who graduated from Southwestern Michigan College with straight A's in 2016, grew up in Dowagiac at the height of the Dogwood Fine Arts Festival in an arts-rich atmosphere that enveloped the community and its schools.

But the salutatorian of Union High's Class of 2014 probably would have gravitated to art anyway.

At the April 28, 2016, student art show, Dr. David Mathews selected Adams' banana watercolor for the Presidential Award. She received certificates for graphic design and drawing.

She was accepted to Michigan State and Western Michigan, but decided to stay close to home and "get as many courses as possible under my belt at a community-college rate. I'm the first to graduate college from my family."

From SMC, Adams moved to Grand Rapids for Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University.

Art garnering more attention

Since returning in 2021 as a graphic designer/photographer with Midwest Energy and Communications (MEC, for which SMC's esports arena is named), Adams' artistic eye notices a change.

"Local chambers are putting more effort into prettying up downtowns like Stone Lake (Cassopolis) and Dowagiac. Now you have murals on buildings, fresh new architecture and new, innovative public elements people can interact with for recreational purposes."

"I hear from co-workers that their kids are showing interest in art careers and how many camps are available at such a young age to broaden their education and skills.

"I feel like there are more opportunities now for art careers than ever. Even technology is a huge help. Creative people can do anything they set their minds to. We are problem-solvers, storytellers and makers."

The Addys

Adams, who waitressed for six years at Lindy's during high school and college, was the subject of a 2018 Dowagiac Daily News article the first time she entered the Addys (American Advertising Awards).

Adams came back with silver medals in an advertisement campaign and copywriting from Grand Rapids.

A mock advertisement for Ball Mason Jars showed a framed image featuring an illustrated life cycle of a butterfly accompanied by different sizes of Mason jars, emblazoned "A size for every stage of life" across the top.

"I had to create a concept piece for a brand advertisement, and I was just really inspired by my own nostalgia [with Mason jars]," she said.

"I went on to do a second year of ADDY awards and won Silver for a perfume package design, Silver for an integrated consumer campaign featuring Ole Smoky Moonshine and Gold for a publication design, 'It's a Circus in Here.' That publication took me on to a District 6 Gold winner, then to a National Gold Addy award," Adams said.

Her National Gold Addy Publication winner spawned Adams' two-book project, "It's a Circus In Here," capturing family history, interactions and experiences through photography, illustrations and "short stories from a family of short people."

Volume One, Process, centers on L&J, the family meat-processing business. Preserve expresses the process of canning, gardening and sharing meals together as a family.

"My intention is that these collections of shared stories will become a comfort to my family to look back on. For the outside audience, these stories provide a unique and entertaining perspective on family, how it adds character and creates a stable foundation to grow."

As an SMC student, Adams in 2015 joined the marketing office as an intern, doing graphic design, often for the Toilet Paper and the Napkin. She did social media and helped plan and market student events.

When she left for Kendall, Adams intended to pursue interior design. So, how did she end up at an electric utility?

"I did (interior design) for a semester, but realized I missed graphic design a ton. Realistically, I didn't want to be in college for five more years and I already had my graphic design associate degree. I decided to reapply to Kendall for its graphic design program and got in. Thankfully, about 50 percent of my BFA was made possible through SMC's classes being so transfer-friendly with Ferris.

"All of those scholarships I received to use at SMC made it a no-brainer to attend there and it allowed me to save money while I worked when I attended to be able to pay for two years of my housing while at KCAD so I could focus on my schooling and not have to work multiple part-time jobs. I completed my graphic design BFA in the fall of 2018."

Prior to MEC, Adams worked in Elkhart for a company that made suspension systems for trailers that towed recreational vehicles. She bought a house with a Niles address that is equally close to Dowagiac and Cassopolis.

"I would drive by MEC and told myself if I ever got an opportunity I would apply. The community spoke very highly of the company."

When a position opened, she beat out dozens of other applicants.

"I've always wanted to have less of a commute and to be able to utilize my degree and work for my local community. MEC was the perfect fit," she said.

Colleague Nick Bogen always wanted to be a meteorologist, but embraced GIS mapping.

"It's really cool he ended up working here," she said. "We are still good friends from school and in charge of planning our 10-year class reunion."

Adams loves MEC's "community, how it impacts people I know and family who utilize the co-op. My grandma put postcards I made to market fiber internet on her refrigerator until they finally signed up for the service.

"I love the variety of projects I get to work on, the resources at my disposal and the opportunities to continue learning. Also, they have great benefits and take good care of their employees."

Photography

Adams' MEC design duties include quarterly campaigns marketing fiber and propane services. She creates emails, print, digital, ads, helps with social media, billboards — a variety of media.

"It involves taking pictures during outages to explain to customers what's going on. I take employee pictures to market our services or to highlight specific people for transparency and relatability. I take photos for our Country Lines Magazine and capture our community involvement as well."

"Going with an art degree is very scary," she admitted. "You are constantly doubted by people in your life and society. 'Starving artist' is no joke. KCAD had a food pantry students were allowed to utilize because it was so hard to make ends meet and they also had winter coat drives. It was a risk to 'follow my bliss,' as my high school English teacher called it."

Art or medicine?

"The way I look at it, you can either hate what you do for a living and make lots of money, you can love what you do and make hardly any or you can find a happy medium. And sometimes people get lucky and love what they do and make lots of money. I know I couldn't pay for the medical degree which was my other passion. I wanted to be a chiropractor.

"Art and medicine, very opposite. I knew whatever I set my mind to I would succeed. I just needed to do one that wouldn't break me financially. Once I graduated from KCOD, I came home. I love the city but it's not where I want to live. "

"I had to bartend/waitress and do freelance work for several months until I found a job that actually utilized my degree. That was a very scary and self-doubting period of my life."

"But then a job opened up in Elkhart for me at MORryde and I worked there for several years. I've been able to do graphic design for a metal manufacturing company and now a utility. It's comforting to know my degree can be so widely utilized, provides me with job security and even remote opportunities."

She is related to renowned aviation artist Rick Herter, who painted the Kalamazoo Air Zoo mural as well as Pentagon commissions.

ArtPrize inspiration

"I know my time in GR really exposed me to all the opportunities that are out there with art and how you can have many random art accents everywhere. They had murals everywhere, under bridges, on sidewalks, sculptures in the river, as random objects in open spaces people could interact with. ArtPrize actually inspired me to go to GR and attend KCAD.

"The churches there were so beautiful. The interior design and branding that went into a lot of the buildings were very inspiring. I definitely felt very invigorated and had a lot more creative juices flowing being in a city like that. GR is art-driven and does a good job making it accessible to the masses."

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Miscellaneous For Sale

For sale, a refurbished mid-2019 Apple Macbook Pro with .4 GHz Intel Core i5 (13.3 inch, 8GB RAM, 256GB SSD) Space Gray (Renewed)
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Notices

Community Events

Cass County Animal Shelter Donation Drive
Sleepy Hollow, Kids-N-Kids and North Red Hill 4-H Clubs are collecting items for the animal shelter. Dry dog food, bleach, kitty litter, dish soap, laundry soap, towels, cleaning supplies as well as monetary accepted.
Wed April 2nd 2-4:30pm.
323 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031.

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Public Notices

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

CITY OF NILES
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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PUBLIC INPUT
ON PROPOSED CODE OF ORDINANCE WAIVER PERTAINING TO SECTION 18-231.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE: That on **MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2025** at 6:00 PM local time, a public hearing will be held at the City of Niles Council Chambers, located inside the Fire Department, 1345 E. Main Street, Niles, MI to obtain input from citizens regarding the request for a waiver to City of Niles Code of Ordinances Section 18-231, to pave over the existing slab and footings on property located at 1221 S. 11th Street, Niles, MI.
The Code of Ordinance Waiver is available for public inspection upon request by contacting Niles City Community Development, by telephone at 269-683-4700 Ext 3020 or by email at CommunityDevelopment@nilesmi.org.
PLEASE BE NOTIFIED that you are invited to attend the hearing and to present your opinions or position concerning the subject of this hearing. If you are unable to attend the hearing, you may send a letter stating your opinions or position to the City of Niles, ATTN: Community Development, 333 N. 2nd Street, Niles, MI 49120, or email communitydevelopment@nlesmi.org by April 14, 2025 at 6:00 PM local time.
The City of Niles will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to those individuals with impairments who wish to attend its public meetings upon receiving at least one week's notice. Any such individuals requiring such aids or services should contact the City by writing to: City of Niles ADA Coordinator, 333 N. 2nd Street, Suite 301, Niles, MI, 49120, or by calling 269.683.4700, ext. 3011.
Further information may be obtained by contacting the Niles City Community Development Office at (269) 683-4700. Written comments received prior to or at the specified time and date of the hearing will also be considered and should be mailed or delivered to the Community Development Director at Niles City Hall, 333 N. 2nd Street, Suite 301, Niles, Michigan 49120.
Ann Young, Community Development Director, City of Niles

Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 29, 2025
HEARING 04.14.25

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF SELF STORAGE SALE

Please take notice Just Simple Storage - Menominee located at N710 County Rd 577, Menominee, MI, 49858 intends to hold an auction of storage units in default of payment. The sale will occur as an online auction via www.storagetreasures.com on 4/17/2025 at 12:00PM. Unless otherwise stated in the below list of Unit #'s the contents are household goods, furnishings and garage essentials. Unit #13. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice.

Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 29 and Apr. 5, 2025
L2L-57240

PUBLIC NOTICE

SILVERBROOK CEMETERY SPRING CLEANUP

Please be advised that winter decorations must be removed from Silverbrook Cemetery by April 1st of each year. Artificial wreathes, flowers and other decorations are strictly prohibited during the period of April 2nd to November 14th. Those not removed by April 1st will be removed by the City. Your cooperation is appreciated.
As a reminder, pets are not permitted in the cemetery at any time.
Please show your respect to others by abiding by this rule.
A complete set of cemetery rules are available in the cemetery office at the main entrance just off East Main Street at Cherry St., across from the Niles Fire Station.

Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 29, 2025
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Unit # Name:
#29 Dale Clifton

Fishing & Garden/lawn equip, Generator, Misc household items, Welder, Pressure washer

Niles Daily Star
Mar. 29 and Apr. 5, 2025
STORAGE AUCTION

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC AUCTION
SATURDAY APRIL 19, 2025
AT 11:00 AM

Furniture, tools, appliances, clothing & miscellaneous abandoned items.

Jacob Baber
Kim Bailey
Ann Fisette
Janet Jones
John Kroll
Angela Mazar
Michael Pierucki
Jose Ramos-Crespo
Elliot Rosenberry
Barbara Sartin
Teresa Sheets
Dean Taylor
Lori Tucker
Caitlyn Wade

Sale to be at:
Eddies Key Lock Storage
26065 US 12
Edwardsburg Mi 49112

Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 29 and Apr. 5, 2025
STORAGE AUCTION

PUBLIC NOTICE

Shawnee Mini-Storage and M-139 Storage 6681 US Highway 31 Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103

This notice is to inform the following tenants that full payment in credit card, cash or money order is due immediately.

If full payment in credit card, cash or money order is not received By April 4, 2025 the contents of the units will be disposed by Shawnee Mini Storage.

1700 Smith Road Facility:
Vickie & Peter Lucas
Thomas Lyman

Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 29 and Apr. 5, 2025
STORAGE DISPOSAL

DEALS ON WHEELS

0 DOWN DELIVERS!

ON THE SPOT APPROVAL

2015 CHEVY CRUZ LTZ
Just in!!
Fully serviced with every option
Only $5,900

2014 CHEVY SONIC LT
Fully service and ready to go
Only $5,900

2016 CHEVY SPARK LT
Showroom new with super low miles
Only $9,900

2016 KIA SOUL
Only 62,000 miles, save thousands on this low miler
Only $11,900

2018 KIA RIO HATCHBACK
Just in!!
Only 53,000 miles
Only $12,900

PONTIAC SOLSTICE
Low miles, great shape…Nice car to drive to car shows
Only $13,900

2019 DODGE GRAND CARAVAN
Get you mini-van for the mini-mum
Only $13,900

2018 CHEVY COLORADO EX-CAB
Just in! Perfect delivery truck with a Tommy lift gate
Only $15,900

INFINITY Q56 PLATINUM 4 X 4
Just in!! Mint condition for only
Only $16,900

2017 JEEP CHEROKEE 4 X 4
Excellent condition!! Trailhawk
Only $16,900

2018 MAZDA CX9 AWD
Just in!!
Save thousands
Only $17,900

2018 TOYOTA RAV 4 4 X 4
Just in!!
These sell fast…
Only $19,900

2018 RAM PRO MASTER CITY
Just in!! Save thousands on this 59,000 mile gas saver
Only $19,900

2019 CHEVY TRAVERSE LT
Just in!! 3rd row seating with a low price so you don't take a beating
Only $19,900

1999 FORD F-250 CLUB CAB XLT
This is a one owner in mint condition with low miles and very sought after 7.3 diesel
Only $19,900

2022 CHRYSLER VOYAGER
Like new with full power options
Only $21,900

2022 MITSUBISHI ECLIPSE CROSS AWD
Off lease, one owner, super low miles, 7 passenger with every option
Only $22,900

2019 KIA STINGER
OH BABY!!
Only $23,900

2023 HYUNDAI SONATA
Like new with super low miles!
Only $24,500

2019 HYUNDAI KONA IRONMAN
Extremely rare. Only 1 of 500. Will be a collector's item
Only $24,900

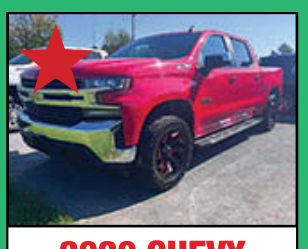
2021 VOLKSWAGEN ID4
GO ELECTRIC
Only $25,900

2003 CHEVY SSR
BIG BLOCK, SUPER RARE
Only 43,000 miles
Only $29,900

2020 NISSAN ARMADA 4 X 4
Big ol rig!!
Only $29,900

2020 FORD F-150 SUPERCAB XLT 4 X 4
Just in!! Only 46,000 miles with the Coyote V-8!!
Only $33,900

2016 FORD F-250 XLT 4 X 4
Crew cab, long box
Diesel, Low miles
Only $34,900



2020 CHEVY SILVERADO CREW Z-71
Oh So Purdy!
Only $41,900

2022 TOYOTA TACOMA BEAST
OFF LEASE, one owner with EVERY option
Only 13,000 miles
Only $43,900

2020 CHEVY SILVERADO LT CREW 4 X 4
Diesel,
Super low miles
Save thousands!
Only $45,900

2020 FORD EXPEDITION LIMITED MAXI 4 X 4
Every option, super condition.
Get ready for winter now
Only $49,900

2023 RAM CREW DUALLY 4 X 4
Big Horn, rollin' coal
Only $57,900

SEE A STAR IT'S A 1 OWNER CAR

269-783-3325 • M-51 DOWAGIAC